

BOSTON CO-OPERATIVE BUILDING COMPANY

Records, 1871-1940 (with gaps)

Charities Collection - CC 22

1 manuscript box	Processed October 1998 by Rachel Wise
5.0 inches	Supervising Archivists:
Accession number: 1998.047	Claire Goodwin and Joan Gearin

ACQUISITION: In 1911, the Boston Children's Aid Society gave its entire library to the Simmons College School of Social Work Library. This library included the annual reports of many local and international welfare and charitable organizations. With the passage of time, this collection took on historical significance and in 1991, it was transferred to the Simmons College Archives.

As part of donations in 1988 and 1989, Donald Moreland, a local social worker and collector of social work history, gave the Simmons College Archives a large number of annual reports, pamphlets and other materials related to various welfare and charitable organizations. Because neither of these donations is a discrete collection, the materials transferred in 1991 from the School of Social Work Library and related materials donated by Donald Moreland were combined to form the Charities Collection. The Simmons College Archives Charities Collection consists of numerous small collections. Accession numbers for the individual collections are assigned during processing.

ACCESS: Unrestricted.

COPYRIGHT: Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be discussed with the College Archivist.

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY:

On May 24, 1871, William Gray, Abby May, Henry B. Rogers, and Anna Cabot Lodge,* and their associates, were officially incorporated as the Boston Co-operative Building Company.¹ This act of incorporation, voted on by the Massachusetts House of Representatives, enabled this organization to "hold and improve real estate in said city (Boston), as homes for working people, at moderate cost...."² Included in the original by-

* Note: Possibly the same Anna Cabot Lodge who was the wife of Henry Cabot Lodge (1850-1924), but no historical documentation to prove this.

¹ *Act of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Boston Co-operative Building Company* [Boston: W. L. Deland, 1871], 1.

² *Ibid.*, 1.

laws, and maintained by the Boston Co-operative Building Company until 1917, was the provision that one half of the officers of co-operation had to be women.³

The Company was established as an “investment philanthropy”⁴ and its original stockholders represented the financial elite of Boston. At a considerable cost, \$159,395.00 per share in 1871, The Boston Co-operative Building Company stockholders were given an annual vote and were part of a movement that combined, “the good of the tenant as well as the income to the landlord.”⁵

The Boston Co-operative Building Company modeled its housing on the work of Sir Sidney Waterlow and Octavia Hill.⁶ Octavia Hill was a London social activist who pioneered the effort to “...make not only the houses of the poor better, but by friendly contact to better the lives of their inmates.”⁷ The agents who worked for the Company functioned as social workers as well as rent collectors. The needs of the tenants were as important as the condition of their housing. It was a policy of the Company to go to the rooms of their tenants to collect their rent in order to maintain close ties.⁸

In 1880, the Boston Co-operative Building Company owned property on East Canton Street, Webster Avenue, and in Dorchester.⁹ In 1910, with their highest census count of tenants, the Company owned property at “Clark Street, Thacher and Endicott in the North End, East Canton and Harrison Ave both in the South End, and Massachusetts Ave in Roxbury.”¹⁰ The last documentation of the Company in *A Directory of Social Agencies Boston and Metropolitan Area* appears in 1940.¹¹ After 1942, the Boston Cooperative Building Company fails to appear in any city directories.¹²

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:

The records of the Boston Co-operative Building Company constitutes 5 linear inches. The collection consists of a published act of incorporation and by-laws, and a series of annual reports. The majority of the collection consists of the annual reports which encompass the years 1881-1940, missing only 1882, 1884-1886, 1917 and 1921.

³ Ibid., 5.

⁴ *Forty-first Annual Report of the Boston Co-operative Building Company, 1912* [Boston: Barta Press], 7.

⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁶ *Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Boston Co-operative Building Company, 1896* [Boston: Barta Press], 7.

⁷ Bell, E. Moberly, *Octavia Hill* [London: Constable & Co., 1943], x.

⁸ *Forty-fourth Annual Report of the Boston Co-operative Building Company, 1915* [Boston: Barta Press], 13.

⁹ *A Directory of the Charitable and Beneficent Organizations* [Boston: A. Williams, 1880], 60.

¹⁰ Johnson, Elizabeth Amy, *The Boston Cooperative Building Company: Tenement House Reform in Boston, 1871-1914*, [Boston: Tufts University, 1998], 77.

¹¹ *A Directory of Social Agencies Boston and Metropolitan Area, 1940* [Boston: Boston Council of Social Agencies], 74.

¹² Johnson, Elizabeth Amy, *The Boston Cooperative Building Company: Tenement House Reform in Boston, 1871-1914*, [Boston: Tufts University, 1998], 78.

From 1881-1916, the annual reports are titled by the year they were published, not the year they are reporting on, and starting in 1918, the annual reports are titled by the year they reporting on, not the year they were published.

SERIES DESCRIPTION:

SERIES I: Boston Co-operative Building Company, Act of Incorporation, 1871.

This series includes one published pamphlet titled *Act of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Boston Co-operative Building Company*. It contains a list of the original officers and stockholders of this organization.

SERIES II: Boston Co-operative Building Company, Annual Reports, 1881-1940 (with gaps).

This series includes the published annual reports which reflect the activities of the organization for the previous year. It includes a detailed summary of the year’s finances for each property held by the Boston Co-operative Building Company, and detailed profiles of its tenants including nationality and employment. The annual reports also offer statistics on the officers elected during the previous year.

CONTAINER LIST:

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		Series I. BCBC, Act of Incorporation.
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